



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 5:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chairman
Councillor D.W.R. Preece - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

H.R. Davies, C. Durham, D.M. Gray, D. Havard, M.P. James, G. Johnston, Mrs G.D. Oliver,
J. Pritchard, D. Rees, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, Mrs M.E. Sargent.

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: Mrs R. Passmore

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Corporate Director Education and Lifelong Learning), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director, Our Schools Our Future, 21st Century Schools, K. Cole (Interim Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), E. Pryce (Service Manager School Effectiveness Unit), G. Evans (Interim Manager Community Education), T. Maher (Interim Assistant Director, Planning & Strategy) and E. Sullivan (Committee Services Officer).

Co-opted Members: Mr T. Crosse (Cardiff ROC), Mr A. Farina Childs (Parent Governor), Mrs. A. Goss (Parent Governor), Mrs P. Ireland (NUT), Mr J. Short (NASUWT) and Mr. P. Jones (NAHT)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan and C. Gordon. Mrs. E. Ashton (UCAS), Mrs J. Havard (NUT), Mr J. Short (NASUWT) and Mr P. Jones (NAHT)

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

It was with great sadness that the Committee acknowledged the passing of Mrs Muriel Bevan wife of Councillor Phil Bevan. Members and Officers stood for a minute of silence to honour her memory.

Members requested that a letter of condolence be sent to Councillor Bevan on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A declaration of interest was received at the beginning of the meeting as follows: Mrs A. Goss (Agenda Item 8.2 Budget Monitoring Report 2012-2013), details are minuted with the respective item.

2. MINUTES - 24TH JULY 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 24th July 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 12, on page nos. 1 - 5), be approved as correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure

4. CABINET REPORTS

The Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEISURE

Councillor Mrs R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning circulated a written report and verbally referred to the Big Welsh Walk on Saturday 3rd November 2012, the opening of Abercarn Library by Huw Lewis AM on Friday the 19th of October 2012 and the short listing of the Bargoed Hanbury Chapel Scheme for two new National Awards in the categories of Heritage and Community Partnership working.

The Cabinet Member was pleased to report that the proposal to reopen Aberbargoed Library with the inclusion of a Multi-Agency Information and Resource Centre had been approved by Cabinet on the 11th of September 2012.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports: -

6. AGENDA SUMMARY

Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed agenda for the meeting.

7. SCRUTINY PROPOSALS FOR THE EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICES

The report detailed the proposed scrutiny overview and governance arrangements to support the new Education Achievement Service (EAS).

The format, membership and terms of reference for the proposed Joint Scrutiny Panel were detailed. Members noted that 2 non-executive members from each Council would form the membership with a standing invitation issued to each Director of Education and relevant

Cabinet Members to attend meetings and answer questions from the Panel.

Consideration was given to the role of the Panel and its relationship with existing Scrutiny Committees. Officers confirmed that Scrutiny would retain the right to invite the EAS Director to discuss local service outcomes and minutes of the JSP meetings would be reported to them as information items.

Members noted that Caerphilly would provide the lead scrutiny and administrative support for the Panel with committee services support being shared between the 5 partner authorities.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and full discussion ensued.

Members requested that consideration be given to direct Governor representation on the Panel. The Democratic Service Manager agreed to ask the Panel to consider extending its membership.

The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered the report approved its recommendations.

8. STANDARDS OF PUPIL ATTAINMENT IN CAERPHILLY - FOUNDATION PHASE, KEY STAGE 2, KEY STAGE 3 (FINAL), KEY STAGE 4 (PROVISIONAL)

The report sought to inform Members of pupil attainment in teacher assessment at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 (Final) and Key Stage 4 external examination outcomes (Provisional).

Members were asked to note that the data for Key Stage 4 had not yet been verified; once this had been done a further report would be brought back for their consideration.

The link between socio-economic background and educational performance was detailed, according to the latest figures based on the percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), Caerphilly is the 4th most socio-economically disadvantaged local authority in Wales. Given that indicator if Caerphilly's performance is higher than 19th in terms of pupil attainment, then that performance would be better than expected. However, officers stressed that expectation at school and LA level were set much higher than this level.

Summary results at Foundation Phase were detailed and Officer's confirmed that the expected level of attainment was well above the national average for all indicators. Caerphilly's rank position varied between 4th and 7th for the different indicators

Summary results at Key Stage 2 were detailed and Members noted that the expected level for English was slightly below the national average, with Mathematics, Science and CSI in line with the national average and well above for Welsh. Compared to the previous year all indicators showed an improvement of around 2% with Caerphilly ranked between 5th and 16th for the different indicators.

Summary results at Key Stage 3 were detailed, it was noted that the expected level for all indicators was below the national average by between 0.1 and 4.1 percentage points. However, the gap with the national average for the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) had been closed from 5.6% to 4.5% and all indicators had seen significant improvements from 2011.

Officers confirmed that the data presented in the Key Stage 4 results summary was provisional and the final results would be available in December. Performance at the L2 Threshold was noted to have decreased by 0.3% with the Level 2 Threshold increasing by 0.3%. Initial individual school results varied considerably and Members were assured that further work would take place with schools in the autumn term to identify the causes of any under performance, and measures put in place to address this for next year.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and full discussion ensued.

The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered its content noted the report.

9. ADDRESSING THE LINK BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE AND ATTAINMENT - A NATIONAL CONTEXT

The report sought to inform Members of the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and pupil's attainment.

Members noted that the gap in performance between those pupils entitled to FSM and those who are not widens the older a child becomes. The progress made in decreasing the gap was illustrated using graphical representations and the differences at the end of each of the key stages was discussed.

Officers confirmed that it was at the final stage of education that socio-economic deprivation had the greatest effect. Considerable progress had been made, with both sets of pupils showing an improvement at KS4 but those not entitled to FSM had improved at a faster rate.

Individual school performance relative to deprivation was outlined; here the majority of Caerphilly's schools lie within +/- 10% of the 'expected' outcome. A number of schools were performing well above expectation and there were also a number of schools performing below expectation, the context of this performance and the need for ongoing communication with schools was emphasised. For some schools this can be due to a special needs resource base or a particular cohort. Members noted that the 2 most deprived schools in Caerphilly had approximately 60% and 70% of their pupils entitled to FSM respectively. Reassurances were given that Officers continued to work with individual schools to raise levels of attainment so that their performance was above expectation.

In conclusion Officer's advised that the challenge ahead was to further improve Caerphilly's position in local authority ranking tables in spite of deprivation levels, overcoming the link between deprivation and poor attainment.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and Members questions were welcomed.

Members expressed concern that the progress made at Foundation Level was being lost through the other key stages. The possible impact that school-spending cuts could have on performance was noted as a concern and clarification was sought with regard to any correlation between how schools spend their money and pupil attainment. Officer's advised that this data was available but would require further analysis.

The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered its content noted the report.

10. PROPOSAL TO REOPEN ABERBARGOED LIBRARY, PANT STREET, INCORPORATING A MULTI-AGENCY INFORMATION AND RESOURCE CENTRE

For the reasons given at the meeting, the Scrutiny Committee resolved that the report be withdrawn.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 6TH NOVEMBER 2012

Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the forward work programme for the 6th November 2012.

12. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE PLACED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

Councillor D. Rees requested a report to analyse the impact of school spending on pupil attainment in Caerphilly and across Wales.

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

Mrs A. Goss declared an interest in that she works with one of the Charities noted in item 8.2. Budget Monitoring Report 2012-2013, as none of the items had been brought forward for review, they were not discussed during the meeting.

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officer's reports, none of which were brought forward for review.

1. Proposal for the Regional Development of the Local Participation Plan.
2. Budget Monitoring Report 2012-2013.

The meeting closed at 6.03 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2012, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN